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ABSTRACT

This handbook is designed to help Maine's citizens and business persons understand why work force development is important in Maine and how Maine's new work force development system will be organized to enable the state to implement the Workforce Investment Act. The following are among the topics discussed throughout the handbook: (1) the importance of the Workforce Investment Act; (2) benefits of work and the adverse impacts that disruptions in work have on individuals and the economy as a whole; (3) changes in Maine's economy over the past 100 years and the changing role of manufacturing in the state; (4) the evolution of government involvement in the workplace and employment services; (5) characteristics of Maine's envisioned work force system (accessibility, simplicity, affordability, comprehensiveness, and business-friendliness); (6) the history and objectives of Maine's CareerCenters initiative and services offered by career centers; (7) ways that the self-directed activities, workshops, and one-on-one services provided by Maine's one-stop career centers help job seekers and employers; (8) ways that work affects communities and work force development approaches for communities to try; and (9) names of parties involved in work force development partnerships in Maine. Section 11 presents a map showing the locations of Maine's 23 career centers. (MN)

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A GUIDE FOR

Maine
PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES

Implementing the Workforce Investment Act

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Introduction

This year Maine implements the Workforce Investment Act. The Act represents the first major overhaul of federal employment programs in over 15 years. The Act makes two major changes: first, it makes skill upgrading and employment resources available to everyone, not just narrow categories of people; and second, it integrates services so that customers only have to go through one door, not dozens, to find out what is available.

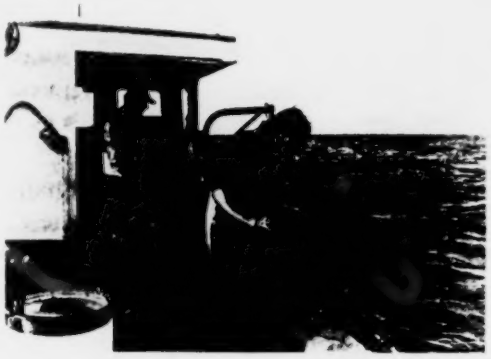
The responsibility for planning the implementation of the new Act lies with the Maine Jobs Council. The Jobs Council is a group of over 20 volunteer business people, educators, union representatives, and citizens. The Council advises Governor King about how to raise the skills of the Maine workforce. At the local level, county commissioners are responsible for creating local advisory boards and contracting for services. The Maine Jobs Council and the Maine County Commissioners Association are cooperating closely in planning the transition to the new law.

This handbook is designed to help citizens and business people understand why workforce development in Maine is so important, and how the new system will generally be organized to serve citizen and business needs. It is only an introduction. There are many technical issues surrounding how this will be done. Some are addressed in the Maine Workforce Investment Act Planning Guidelines, which has been prepared by the Maine Jobs Council, and is available at 1-888-457-8883. Others have yet to be worked out.

We encourage you to get informed, get involved, and to help make the new law a success. For if Maine succeeds in workforce development, then it will certainly succeed in achieving its longstanding economic development goals of higher incomes and lower unemployment. We hope this handbook contributes to that end.

The Opportunity

Our Work



Work is part of the very essence of being human.

Work gives us pride. When we do something well, we feel a sense of accomplishment.

Work connects us to others. By doing things with others, and for others, we feel a sense of belonging.

Work gives us material benefits. The money we earn allows us to enjoy other valuable dimensions of life.

Work fulfills our ideals. Our contribution makes the world a better place for others.

We in Maine have a reputation for a good work ethic. The quality and care we put into our work is known around the world.

So when our work is disrupted somehow — when the mill closes, when the pink slip arrives, when we are told our performance is inadequate — then we feel vulnerable and exposed.

Disruption is a good word for what is happening in the job market today. In 1998 alone, a good year overall, over 12,000 Maine workers experienced a major layoff, and over 100,000 were unemployed at one time or another. Disruption is now a permanent feature of the economic landscape. Most of us will be "dislocated" at some point or another, in some way or another, in our work lives.

When the world changes, we must change with it. Today every worker must re-create his or her skills and his or her role in the workplace on a regular basis.

Helping us do this is what the Workforce Investment Act is all about.

Our Economy

The setting for our work is the economy.

Our economy has been called a system of "creative destruction." New technology leads to waves of change in what we do and how we do it.

A hundred years ago most Maine people worked on farms. Today only one in 45 Maine workers grows our food.

Fifty years ago one in four Maine people worked in paper or textile or shoe mills. Today only one in 25 Maine workers are employed in those industries.

Even these figures understate the change, because the modern farm and the modern factory have no resemblance to the places where so many of our predecessors worked. Farms today function as miniature science laboratories, where soil and seed and nutrition and water are constantly tested and balanced. Factories today require sophisticated skills with computer-aided design and other machines. A strong back is no longer the first requirement on farms and in factories as it was in generations past.

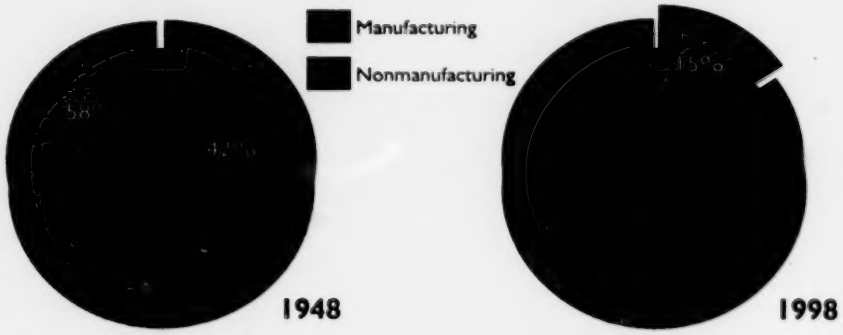
Change extends beyond the workplace to ourselves. We have fewer children today. Consequently, there are fewer young people entering the workforce. Therefore, much of the workforce which is in place today will be the workforce we will have in ten years. We can't count on a replacement generation to come in and pick up all the new skills needed for the next century. We have to do it ourselves.

Put another way, Maine's workforce is expected to grow slowly during the next ten years. The only way that Maine's economy can grow is for each of us, individually, to become more productive as workers.

All of this — the changing jobs, the new technologies, the slow growth in the labor force — means that we must commit ourselves to lifelong learning. We are Maine's most important natural resource.

It will take hard work. But, after all, that's what we're known for here in Maine.

Changing Role of Manufacturing



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Our Evolving Services

There have been three waves of government involvement in the workplace.

In the Depression years, the national government set up safety net programs for all American workers — unemployment insurance, social security, health and safety regulations, and the job service (matching lists of available jobs and job seekers).

In the Great Society years of the 1960s, the national government created job-training programs to help people overcome individual barriers of race, gender, and/or disability.

In the 1980s, the national government created new kinds of job-training programs to help long-time workers who were dislocated by changes in the new global economy, i.e., plant-closings.

These programs performed well. They addressed the problems they were intended to address. But they fall far short of what we need today for two reasons:

1. These programs were designed to meet the needs of small, well-defined target groups. Today the system must be able to meet the needs of every single worker, not just those experiencing problems; and,
2. These programs were designed to provide one-time training. Today the system must be designed so that it encourages ongoing training for every worker.

The new federal Workforce Investment Act is intended to meet these new universal training needs. But it can only do so if we in Maine design it effectively.

Workforce Investment Act of 1998

Implementing the Workforce Investment Act

Goals for a Workforce System for Maine

A workforce system goes far beyond federal job-training programs like the Workforce Investment Act, or WIA. It includes adult education, the university, the vocational colleges, the technology centers, the internet, private schools and training institutes – every conceivable place a Maine worker might turn to advance his or her skills.

Yet the Workforce Investment Act can provide the linchpin. It can provide the overall structure of physical locations and information which will open up the entire world of resources in one spot to a Maine worker.

A start has already been made in Maine. There are now 23 "CareerCenters" open in Maine at which people can gain access to the full range of educational and training offerings in a given area. These (which are described more fully on the next page) can be a jumping-off point for much more.

But what is the "much more" that we want to achieve?

Here is one vision:

Access – no individual in Maine should be more than 30 minutes away from a community college campus or CareerCenter .

Simplicity – every Maine citizen should be able to understand what a CareerCenter does and where the nearest is located.

Affordability – every Maine citizen should be able to afford the training he or she needs and wants.

Comprehensive – the full range of desired education and training programs should be available to every Maine citizen in every part of the state, either directly or through distance learning and internet options.

Business-friendly – every Maine employer should understand what training and education opportunities are available for its workers, and should have the opportunity to create partnerships with Maine educational groups to establish unique training programs.

CareerCenter

The Maine Employment Resource

Building on CareerCenters

The Maine Department of Labor launched the CareerCenter initiative in partnership with community organizations. CareerCenters have recently been established in 23 cities and towns in Maine.

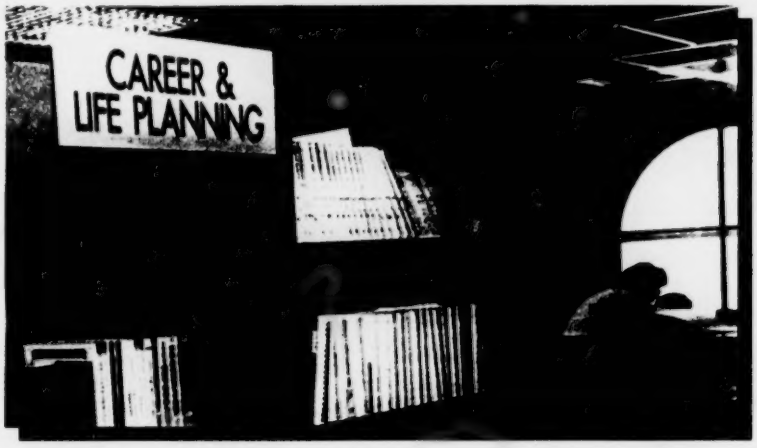
A CareerCenter is a conveniently located office with a full range of services related to job searching, training, and education. Each has a core set of services, including general information and referral, computerized job and resume banks, workshops, counseling, and access to training and education. There are special programs and services available for people with disabilities. Many have additional programs located under the same roof; all provide connections to other related programs in their areas.

CareerCenters offer three levels of services. The first level is self-help. This includes the career library, computer internet access to job banks (for individuals) and resume banks (for employers), general information on labor market trends, brochures and catalogs of local schools and training providers, and self-guided resume writing programs. These resources are available to anyone on a walk-in basis.

The second level is group workshops. These are sessions organized by the local CareerCenter staff addressing common issues faced by many people, such as how to interview for a job, how to make use of internet job-search tools, and how to network and build contacts.

The third level is customized programs. These range in intensity from general counseling and advice to testing and assessment to full-scale training courses.

The Workforce Investment Act will strengthen Maine CareerCenters by requiring the ongoing participation and cooperation of many training and education programs which are not currently involved. This will mean more choices and possibilities for individuals and businesses.



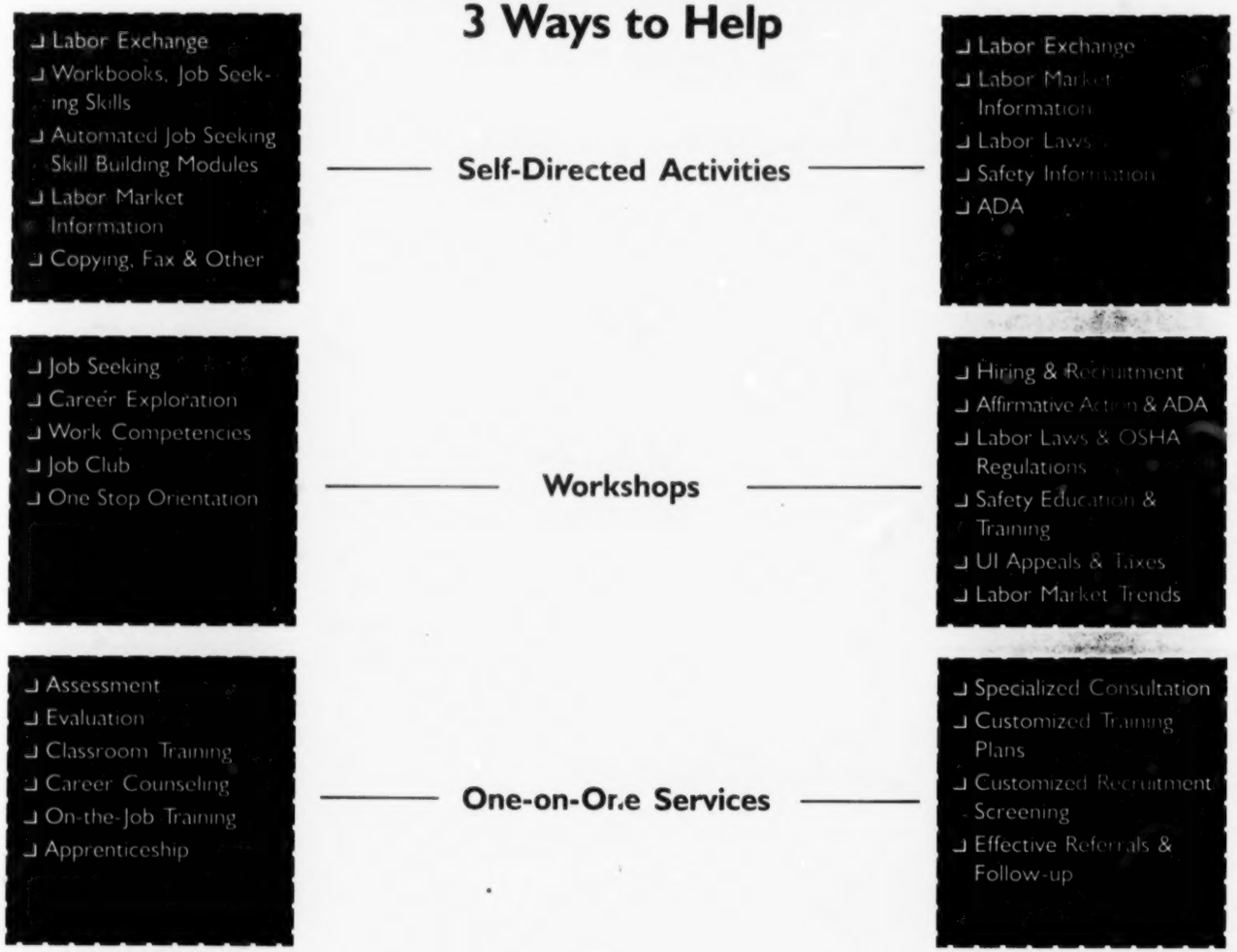
What It Means to You

The Job Seeker

CareerCenters offer something for everyone, including:

- ❑ Access to state and national internet job banks, with some jobs that can be applied for online;
- ❑ Help with resume-writing, aptitudes, and career decisions;
- ❑ Information on growing occupations and what is needed to qualify;
- ❑ Summer jobs and student internship information;
- ❑ Brochures and applications for area training and education courses;
- ❑ Information on grants and loans for education and training;
- ❑ Workshops on job interviews, resumes, networking;
- ❑ Individualized career counseling; and
- ❑ Individualized training plans.

Maine One-Stop CareerCenter 3 Ways to Help



The Employer

CareerCenters help businesses of all types and sizes, from major corporations to small stores, from high tech research labs to hot dog stands. Here is what they offer:

- ❑ Access to a computerized, online resume bank containing applicants from Maine and the nation;
- ❑ Information and funds on educational training resources;
- ❑ Funds for customized training;
- ❑ Connections with other employers for the possibility of creating cooperative advertising, training programs, or recruitment efforts.

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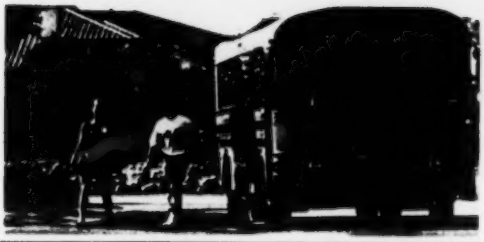
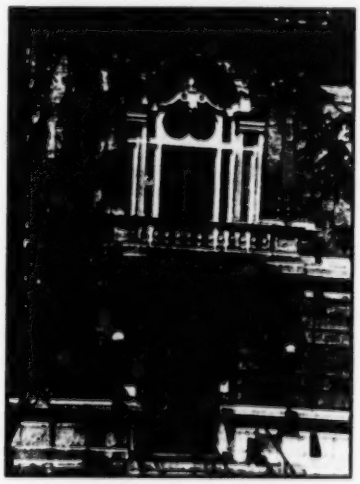


The Community

Work affects the community in fundamental ways.

For lifelong learning to become truly embedded in Maine, it must be embraced by more than one or two companies, one or two schools, or one or two individuals. It must be embraced by entire communities.

How can this be done? There are no tried and true formulas. The concern is too new. People are learning on the fly. Part of lifelong learning, it turns out, is learning how to change one's community.



Some approaches your community can try:

1. Do a community self-assessment. Survey employers, citizens, students, teachers. See what they say that they need. Then compare what is actually available in terms of programs, courses, hours. Develop a plan to cover the gap.
2. Link schools and employers more closely. Encourage employers to come into school and teach courses. Encourage teachers to come into the workplace and conduct training. Participate in school-to-work programs. Break down the barriers of geography and age which separates learning and work.
3. Make the most of your local CareerCenter. Bring students and workers to visit. Participate on their committees. Volunteer to be on local Workforce Investment Boards which oversee the CareerCenter system.
4. Set high community goals for lifelong learning, school performance, and community participation. Measure success annually. Challenge existing institutions to do better. Give annual awards and recognition for high performance.

The Maine Aspirations Foundation has sponsored community education programs in Maine for nearly a decade. They can provide your community with handbooks and contacts and technical assistance. Call them at 622-6346. At the same office is the Maine Development Foundation, which has experience with local community goal measurement projects.

Through efforts like these, your community will model what lifelong learning is all about to every student and resident. It is only when lifelong learning is the norm, and not something exceptional, that success can be achieved.

The Service Partners

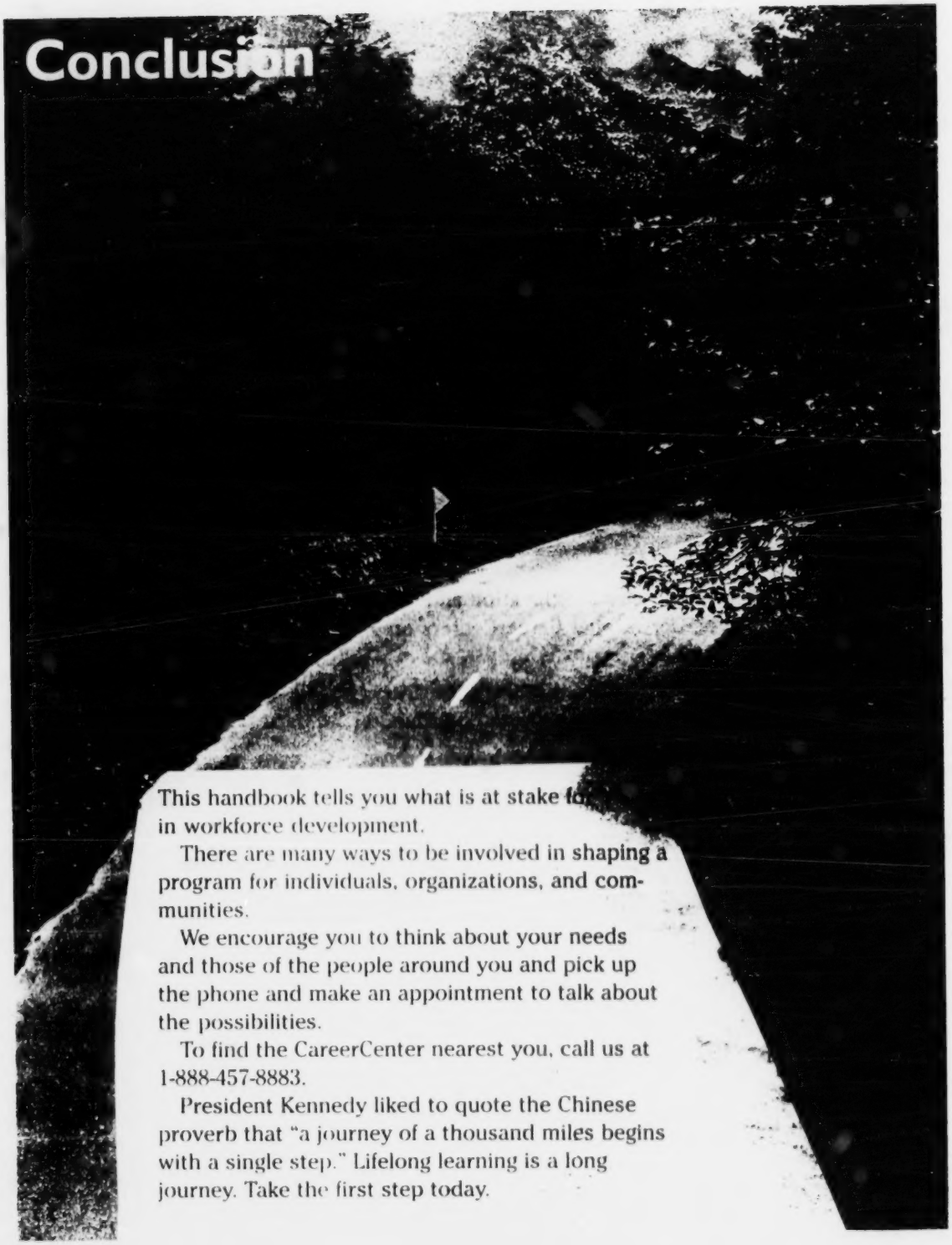
A surprising number of institutions and agencies engaged in workforce development are in your community. There are agencies working with people with a wide range of need and abilities. Even people working in these agencies might be surprised by how much is going on.

CareerCenters offer a place where all education and training resources come together. Here's what CareerCenters offer to partners in this field:

1. A full resource library, free to all who walk in the door, with self-help career and resume books, and information on financial aid;
2. Fully-equipped computer rooms that an organization may reserve for its clients, that provides Internet access to national job banks;
3. Access to weekly workshops on topics like job hunting, evaluating training, and the latest labor market information.
4. Opportunity to meet with other organizations, to share resources and information and to help out each other's clients.

Adult education programs, technical colleges, vocational technical high schools, University of Maine campuses, private schools, community action agencies, rehabilitation service agencies, will all find benefits for their students and clients at CareerCenters. The more they get involved, the better we can serve people in Maine.

Conclusion



This handbook tells you what is at stake for you in workforce development.

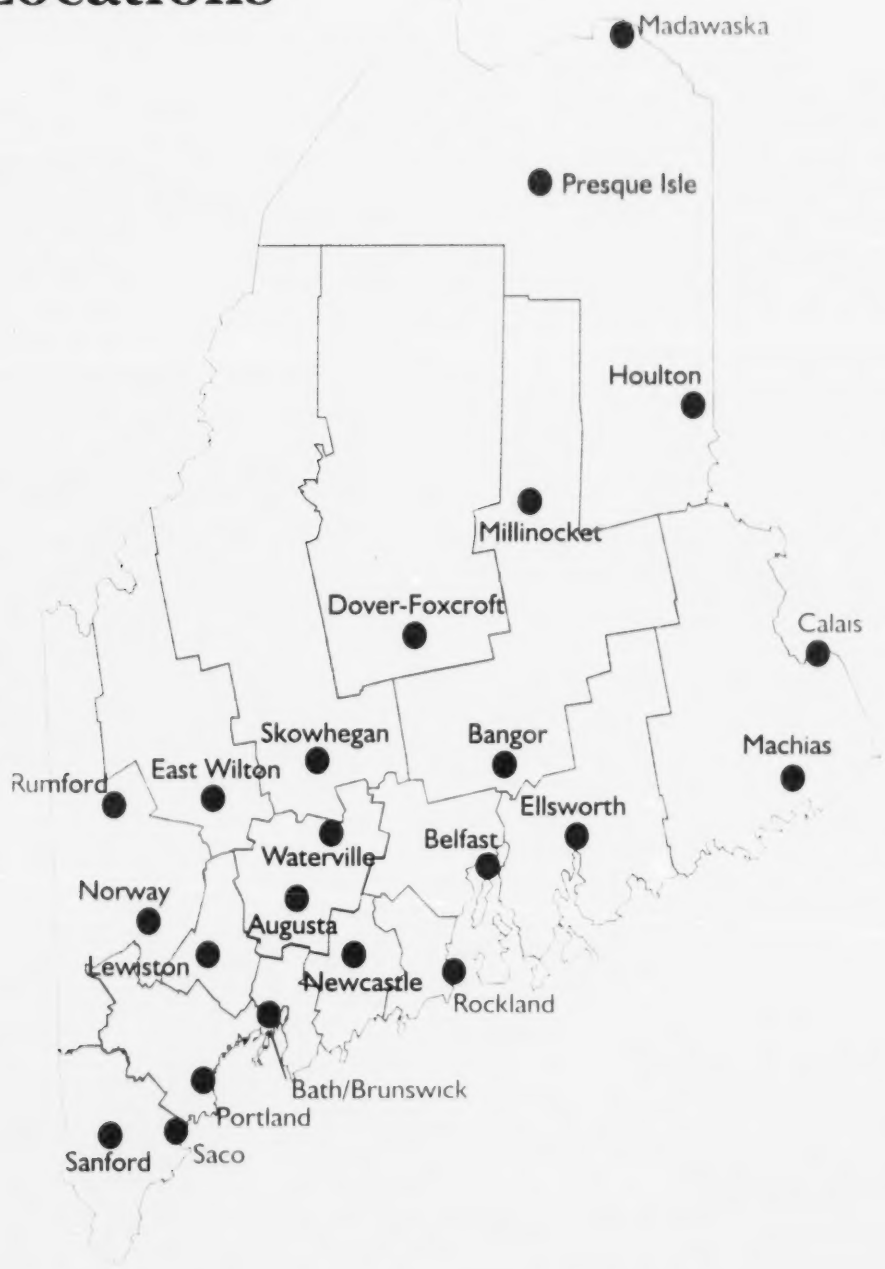
There are many ways to be involved in shaping a program for individuals, organizations, and communities.

We encourage you to think about your needs and those of the people around you and pick up the phone and make an appointment to talk about the possibilities.

To find the CareerCenter nearest you, call us at 1-888-457-8883.

President Kennedy liked to quote the Chinese proverb that "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Lifelong learning is a long journey. Take the first step today.

CareerCenter Locations



Notes